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ABSTRACT

Although the U.S. Constitution of 1787 strengthened the national government and provided for the reestablishment of a national navy, congressional debate on rebuilding the Navy did not begin in earnest until the end of 1793. On March 27, 1794, Congress reestablished the Navy with authorization for six vessels. In 1797 the launching of the first three frigates laid the foundation for the new U.S. Navy. This lesson plan uses five primary historical documents, written and disseminated between 1793 and 1798, to study the establishment of the new U.S. Navy. The lesson plan contains teaching activities, including history and civics and government standards correlation activities and document analysis activities. Reproductions of the five documents and a written document analysis worksheet are provided. (BT)

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ED 466 426

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TEACHING WITH DOCUMENTS

Launching the New U.S. Navy

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Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan:
Launching the New U.S. Navy

Background

The United States won its independence from Great Britain with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, but freedom of the seas was yet to be achieved. In the years following the Revolutionary War, Barbary pirates preyed on American vessels and held seamen for ransom. As a result of such foreign interference with essential trade, the new country's weak economy began to suffer, and a national debate ensued. Suspicious of centralized power and a standing military, followers of Thomas Jefferson thought it was wiser and cheaper to meet the demands for ransom, while Federalists believed that a national navy would win America international respect and ensure its freedom on the seas. Although the Constitution of 1787 strengthened the National Government and provided for the reestablishment of a national navy, congressional debate on rebuilding the Navy did not begin in earnest until the end of 1793. On March 27, 1794, Congress reestablished the Navy with authorization for six vessels. Finally, in 1797 the launching of the first three frigates, U.S.S. *United States*, U.S.S. *Constellation*, and U.S.S. *Constitution*, laid the foundation for the new United States Navy.

On December 3, 1793, in his annual address to Congress, President George Washington warned, "If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, . . . it must be known, that we are at all times ready for war." (Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793) A few days later, Washington learned of a truce that had been signed between Portugal and Algiers. This truce opened the way for Barbary pirates to cruise the Atlantic and threaten American trade with much of Europe. In response to these events, on January 2, 1794, the House of Representatives resolved that a naval force to protect American commerce ought to be provided and appointed a committee to prepare a report on what kind of naval force would be necessary. Three weeks later, the committee chairman, Thomas Fitzsimons, a Federalist from Pennsylvania, reported that a force of six frigates would be sufficient.

In March of 1794, the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the "Act

to provide a Naval Armament." It authorized the President to acquire six frigates, four of 44 guns each and two of 36 guns each, by purchase or otherwise. In addition, it specified how many crew members would be necessary and what their pay and daily rations would be. (Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794, Page 1 and 2)

Two weeks after Congress authorized the construction of six frigates, President George Washington sent a message to Congress nominating the six men who would command the newly authorized vessels. (Document 3: George Washington's Message to the U.S. Sentate, June 3, 1794) John Barry headed the list as senior captain. He was one of the most courageous and successful officers in the Revolutionary War navy. He was also the last officer of the Continental Navy in active service.

The act that authorized construction of the first six frigates called for a halt in construction if peace with Algiers was secured. Such a peace came in early 1796--before the ships were completed--but President Washington urged continued congressional support. Congress approved completion of three frigates, the U.S.S. *United States*, the U.S.S. *Constellation*, and the *U.S.S. Constitution*. The three vessels were completed and launched in 1797. The Department of War was responsible for their construction, and the Department of the Treasury was responsible for all related contracts and disbursements. Officials in those departments and others recommended to Congress that a separate naval department be created that would be staffed with persons competent in, and solely responsible for, naval affairs. At the same time, tensions with France prompted greater support for a strong navy. The act establishing the Department of the Navy was signed by President John Adams on April 30, 1798. (Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798)

On May 18, 1798, President John Adams nominated Benjamin Stoddert as the first Secretary of the Navy to lead the newly created executive department. Stoddert was a merchant from Maryland who had served as secretary to the Continental Board of War during the American Revolution. He was committed to the establishment of a strong Navy and served as Secretary from June 1798 until March 1801. (Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798)

Related Web Site

Naval Historical Center http://www.history.navy.mil/

The Documents

Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793

Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794

Document 3: George Washington's Message to the U.S. Senate, June 3, 1794

Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798

Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798

Lesson Resources

Standards Correlations

Teaching Activities

Document Analysis Worksheet

Page URL: http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/new_us_navy/new_us_navy.html

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Teaching Activities

Standards Correlations

This lesson correlates to the National Standards for United States History:

- Era 3 - Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)
  - Standard 3A: Demonstrate understanding of the issues related to the creation and ratification of the United States Constitution and the new Government it established.

This lesson also correlates to the National Standards for Civics and Government:

- Standard I. A. 2: Explain the major arguments advanced for the necessity of politics and government.
- Standard III. B. 1: Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues regarding the purposes, organization, and functions of the national government.

Cross-curricular Connections

Share this exercise with your history and government colleagues.

Analyzing the Document

1. Provide students with a copy of the United States Constitution and ask them to locate general references to the common defense and specific references to the Navy in the document.
2. Encourage students to share their findings with the class. As students identify references, write down the article and section numbers and a brief statement about each one on the board. The most important references include the following:

   In the Constitution's preamble: ". . . provide for the common defense."

   In Article I, section 8: "The Congress shall have Power To . . . provide and maintain a Navy . . . make Rules for the Government and Regulation

duties to the rest of the world, and loud and imperious upon you the necessity of placing ourselves in a condition of complete defence, and of exacting from them the fulfilment of their duties towards us. The United States ought not to entertain a persuasion, that, contrary to the order of human events, they will forever keep at a distance those painful appeals to arms, with which the history of every other nation abounds. There is a hand due to the United States among nations, which will be withheld, if not absolutely lost, by the reputation of weakness. If we desire to avoid insult, we must be able to repel it; - if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known, that we are at all times ready for War. - The documents, which will be laid before you, will show the amount, and kinds of Arms and Military Stores, now in our Magazines and Arsenals: - and yet an additional sum is to

Document 1: Annual Address by George Washington, December 3, 1793

An Act to provide a Naval Armament.

WHEREAS the depredations committed by the Algerine corsairs on the commerce of the United States, render it necessary that a naval force should be provided for its protection.

SECT. I. *Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled*, That the President of the United States, be authorized to provide, equip and employ, four ships to carry forty four guns each, and two ships to carry thirty six guns each. by purchase or otherwise.

SECT. II. *And be it further enacted*, That there shall be employed on board each of the said ships of forty four guns, one captain four lieutenants, ~~one captain and~~ one lieutenant of marines, one chaplain one surgeon, and two surgeon's mates; and in each of the ships of thirty six guns, one captain, three lieutenants, one lieutenant of marines, one surgeon, and one surgeon's mate, who shall be appointed, and commissioned, in like manner as other officers of the United States are.

SECT. III. *And be it further enacted*, That there shall be employed in each of the said ships, the following warrant officers, who shall be appointed by the President of the United States, to wit: one sailing master, one purser, one boatswain, one gunner, one sailmaker, one carpenter, and eight midshipmen: and the following petty officers, who shall be appointed by the captains of the ships, respectively, in which they are to be employed, viz. two master's mates, one captain's clerk, two boatswain's mates, ~~one cockswain~~, one sailmaker's mate, two gunner's mates, one yeoman of the gun-room, nine quarter-gunners, (and for the four larger ships) two additional quarter-gunners, two carpenter's mates, one armourer, one steward, one cooper, one master at arms, and one cook.

SECT. IV. *And be it further enacted*, That the crews of each of the said ships of forty four guns, shall consist of ~~two~~ seamen, ~~two~~ midshipmen, and ordinary seamen, one sergeant, one corporal, one drum, one fife, and fifty marines; and that the crews of each of the said ships of thirty six guns, shall consist of one hundred and ~~eight~~ able seamen and ~~six~~ midshipmen, ~~six~~ ordinary seamen, one sergeant, two corporals, one drum, one fife, and forty marines, over and above the officers herein before mentioned. 150 ~~&~~ 100 Thirty Ninety

Section 2 And be it further enacted that the President of the United States, be and he is hereby authorized to provide by purchase or otherwise, in lieu of the said five Ships a naval armament not exceeding in the whole, that by this act directed, so that no Ship thus provided shall carry less than thirty two guns: as he may so consider any preparation thereof, which in his discretion he may think proper.

Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794, Page 1

7.

1 SECT. 6. *And be it further enacted*, That the pay to be allowed to the
2 petty officers, midſhippen, ſeamen, ordinary ſeamen and marines, ſhall
3 be fixed by the Preſident of the United States, Provided, That the whole
4 ſum to be given for the whole pay aforeſaid ſhall not exceed ~~60,000~~ dol- 27
5 lars per month: and that each of the ſaid perſons ſhall be entitled to one
6 ration per day.

1 SECT. 7. *And be it further enacted*, That the ration ſhall conſiſt of as
2 follows:

Sunday,	1lb.	bread,
	1½	beef,
	½	pint of rice,
Monday,	1	bread,
	1	pork,
	½	pint peaſe, or beans
and	4oz.	cheeſe,
Tueſday,	1lb.	bread
	1½	beef,
and	1	potatoes or turnips, and pudding,
Wedneſday,	1lb.	bread,
	2oz.	butter,
	4	cheeſe,
and	½	pint rice,
Thurſday,	1lb	bread,
	1	pork,
and	½	pint peaſe, or beans,
Friday,	1lb.	bread,
	1	ſalt fiſh, 2oz. butter or 1 gill of oil.
and	1	of potatoes,
Saturday,	1lb.	bread,
	1	pork,
	½	pint peas, or beans.
and	4oz.	cheeſe,

And there ſhall alſo be allowed one ~~gill and an half~~ of diſtilled ſpirits per day or in lieu thereof one ~~pint and a half~~ of beer per day to each ration.

1 SECT. 8. *Provided always, and be it further enacted*, That if a peace
2 ſhall take place between the United States and the regency of Algiers,
3 that no farther proceedings be had under this act.

Paſſed the Houſe of Repreſentatives, March 10th, 1794.

Document 2: Senate Draft of an "Act to provide a Naval Armament", March 18, 1794, Page 2

United States 3d June 1794.

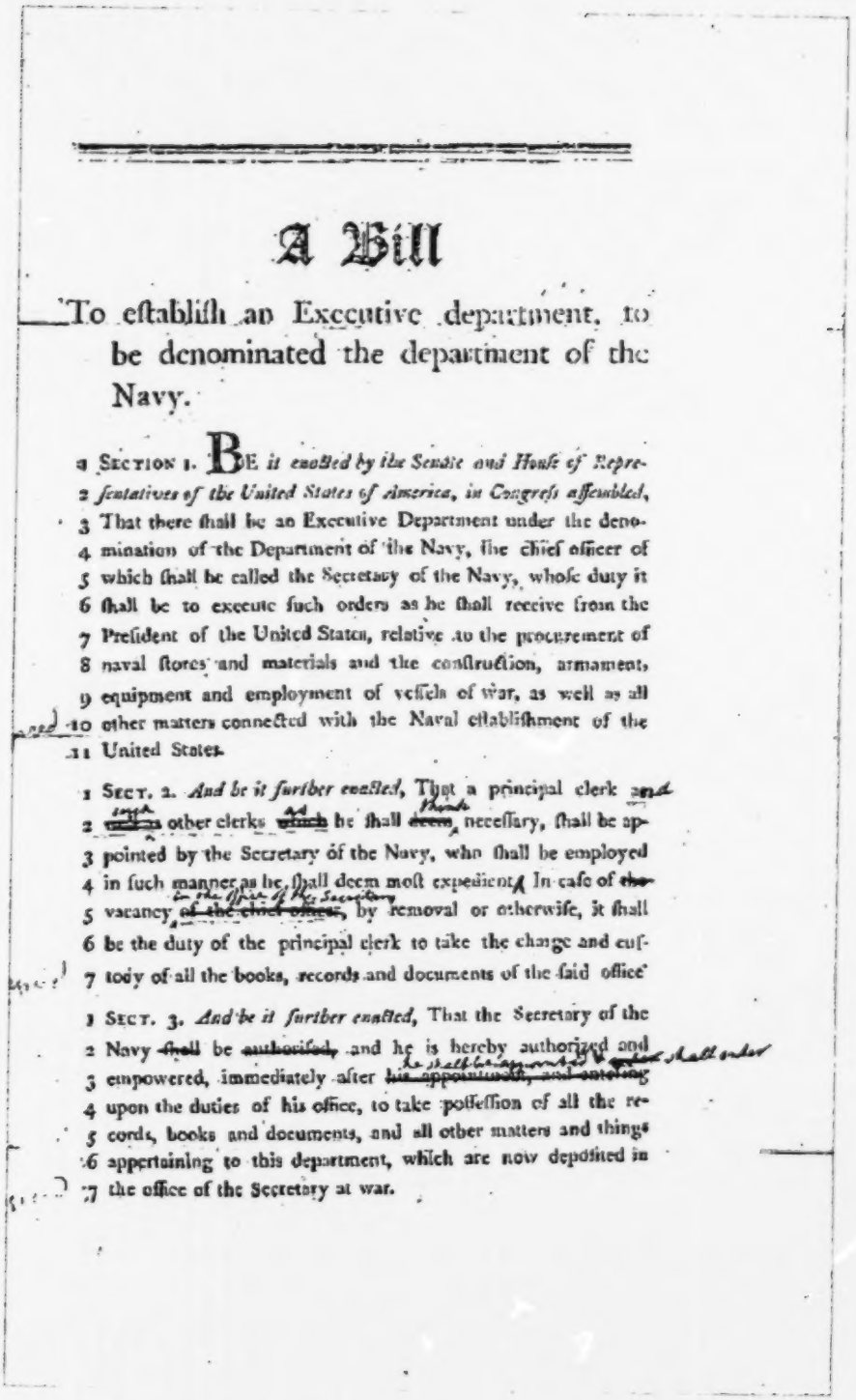
Gentlemen of the Senate

I nominate the following persons to be Captains of the Ships to be procured in pursuance of the act to provide a naval armament. — The assistance of these officers will be necessary in the building of the said Ships, but the other officers will not be required until the Ships shall be nearly completed. —

John Barry,
Samuel Nicholson,
Silas Talbot,
Joshua Barney,
Richard Dale, and
Thomas Truxton.

Go: Washington

Document 3: George Washington's Message to the U.S. Sentate, June 3, 1794



A Bill

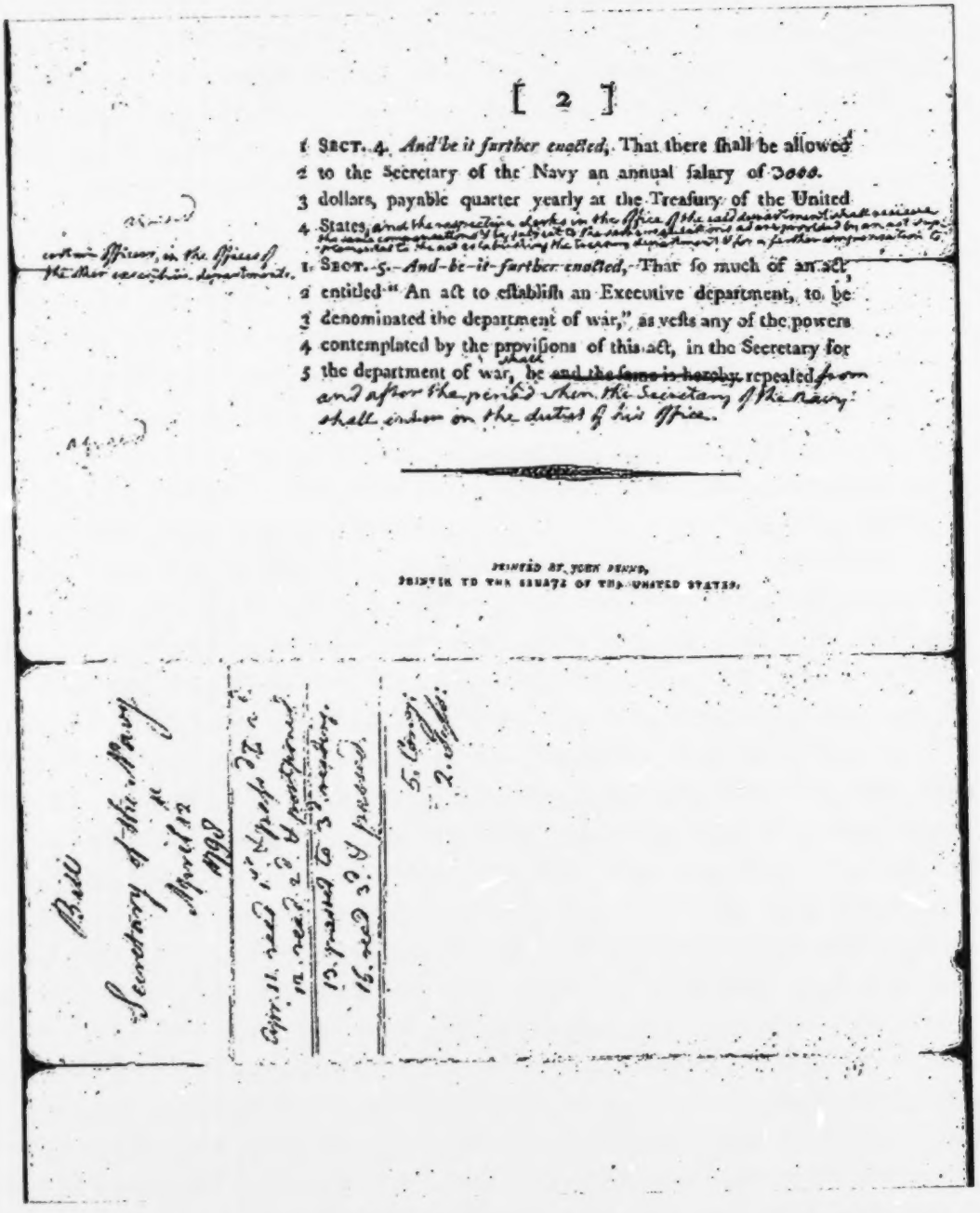
To eſtabliſh an Executive department, to be denominated the department of the Navy.

Section 1. Be it *enacted by the Senate and Houſe of Repreſentatives of the United States of America, in Congreſs aſſembled*, That there ſhall be an Executive Department under the denomination of the Department of the Navy, the chief officer of which ſhall be called the Secretary of the Navy, whoſe duty it ſhall be to execute ſuch orders as he ſhall receive from the Preſident of the United States, relative to the procurement of naval ſtores and materials and the conſtruction, armament, equipment and employment of veſſels of war, as well as all other matters connected with the Naval eſtabliſhment of the United States.

Sect. 2. *And be it further enacted*, That a principal clerk and ~~ſuch~~ other clerks ~~which~~ he ſhall ~~deem~~ think neceſſary, ſhall be appointed by the Secretary of the Navy, who ſhall be employed in ſuch manner as he ſhall deem moſt expedient. In caſe of ~~the~~ vacancy ~~of the chief officer~~ in the office of the Secretary, by removal or otherwiſe, it ſhall be the duty of the principal clerk to take the charge and cuſtody of all the books, records and documents of the ſaid office.

Sect. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That the Secretary of the Navy ~~ſhall~~ be ~~authoriſed~~, and he is hereby authorized and empowered, immediately after ~~his appointment, and entering~~ he ſhall be appointed & ſhall enter upon the duties of his office, to take poſſeſſion of all the records, books and documents, and all other matters and things appertaining to this department, which are now depoſited in the office of the Secretary at war.

Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798, page 1)



[2]

SECT. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That there shall be allowed to the Secretary of the Navy an annual salary of 3000. dollars, payable quarter yearly at the Treasury of the United States, and the respective clerks in the office of the said department shall receive the same compensation by law as the clerks employed in an act supplementary to the act establishing the treasury department & for a further compensation &c.

certain officers, in the offices of the other executive departments.

SECT. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That so much of an act entitled "An act to establish an Executive department, to be denominated the department of war," as vests any of the powers contemplated by the provisions of this act, in the Secretary for the department of war, be ~~and the same is hereby~~ shall repealed from and after the period when the Secretary of the Navy shall enter on the duties of his office.

PRINTED BY JOHN DUNN,
PRINTER TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Paid Secretary of the Navy April 12 1798

Sept. 11. read 2d & 3d time & passed.

12. Sent to H. R. for concurrence.

16. Sent to H. R. for concurrence.

Sept. 25. Read 2d & 3d time & passed.

Document 4: A Bill to Establish the Department of the Navy, April 11, 1798, page 2)

Gentlemen of the Senate

I nominate Benjamin Stoddert of Maryland to be Secretary of the Navy, in the Place of George Cabott who has declined his appointment.

George Woodruff of Georgia to be Attorney for the District of Georgia in the Place of Charles Jackson resigned

Frederick William Lutze of Stetin in Prussia to be Consul of the United States at Stetin.

John Adams

United States May 18 1798

Document 5: John Adams's Message to the U.S. Senate, May 18, 1798

Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

___ Newspaper	___ Map	___ Advertisement
___ Letter	___ Telegram	___ Congressional record
___ Patent	___ Press release	___ Census report
___ Memorandum	___ Report	___ Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

___ Interesting letterhead	___ Notations
___ Handwritten	___ "RECEIVED" stamp
___ Typed	___ Other
___ Seals	

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:
_____

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:
_____

POSITION (TITLE):
_____

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?
_____

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:
_____
_____
_____

B. Why do you think this document was written?
_____
_____

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.
_____
_____

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:
_____
_____

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:
_____
_____

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of the land and naval Forces."

In Article I, section 10: "No State shall, without the Consent of Congress . . . keep Troops or Ships of War in time of Peace . . ."

In Article II, section 2: "The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy . . ."

3. Divide students into five groups. Provide each group with a different Navy document and a copy of the Document Analysis Worksheet.

4. Instruct each group to analyze their document and respond to the questions on the Document Analysis Worksheet.

5. Ask a spokesperson from each group to describe their document to the class. While listening to the presentations, students should determine which Constitutional provision each document relates to.

6. Lead a discussion to compare student answers. Encourage students to further analyze the Constitution and determine the relationship between Congress and the President with regard to nominations as illustrated by documents #3 - Washington and #5 - Adams.

7. As a follow-up activity, ask students to research current government activities related to the Navy and determine which provisions in the Constitution they relate to. The Web sites of the Senate [http://www.senate.gov], the House of Representatives [http://www.house.gov], & the White House [http://www.whitehouse.gov] are online resources for such information.

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